
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION(S)

Submitted by: Conservation Community

Finding: *(i.e., Conclusions reached after investigation and/or evaluation of facts)*

Comprehensive and unified public education regarding defensible space, ember ignitions, and homeowner responsibility and expectations associated with living in a fire-dependent environment is insufficient.

Background and Supporting Evidence: *(A short statement justifying the Finding and describing desired outcome(s); usually no more than half a page.)*

Post-Angora Fire discussions have indicated a need for more comprehensive public education of defensible space, ember ignitions and ignition-resistant building materials, and homeowner responsibility (to themselves, their neighbors, and Tahoe's unique environment) and expectations (e.g. The communities around the Lake are surrounded by forest).

Further, public education regarding the purpose of thinning and prescribed burns (to reduce the risk of catastrophic crown fires) and severe fire weather conditions and its effect on fire behavior, is also lacking. Finally, the Basin communities lack adequate evacuation plans.

Recommendation(s) *(Based upon an analysis of the Finding, the following recommendation(s) should be made to the Governors):*

1. **The Governors assemble one unified group of stakeholders, fire professionals, regulators and community and environmental advocates and direct them to develop one set or package of unified education materials which address:**
 - a. **Defensible space,**
 - b. **BMPs,**
 - c. **Ember ignitions (including retrofitting existing homes and appropriate building materials for new homes),**
 - d. **Homeowner responsibility,**
 - e. **Tahoe's Forest environment and dependence on fire, benefits of appropriate thinning; and**

- f. **How to be prepared for a fire (e.g. evacuation routes for all areas of the Basin, what a homeowner should do to prepare in advance, need to plan accordingly on days designated severe fire weather, etc.).**

Where there are currently disagreements regarding some of these practices (e.g. appropriate ground cover in the near home zone), it is expected that the other processes and working groups in place will resolve those issues prior to the implementation of this recommendation (meaning this group would not be debating the information but merely assembling it and determining how to best disseminate the message to the public).

2. TRPA and building departments need to consider the local and cumulative impacts of new (or re-) development on the ability to evacuate. For example, along Highway 89 on west shore, traffic can be stopped for miles from the Tahoe City intersection with Highway 28 during the warmer months ("fire season"). Any development which will increase traffic (whether 10, 100 or 1000 additional vehicles) will affect the ability to evacuate in an emergency situation.

Impacts of Implementation: *(The implementation of any Recommendation is likely to have specific impacts. Consider potential consequences related to each of the following areas):*

Analysis of impacts on the following factors is **REQUIRED** (Best Estimate):

- ☐ Cost

Much of the information is already available and simply needs to be combined into one package and provided through a unified approach. Efforts should be coordinated with information regarding Defensible Space and BMP Inspections as well.

- ☐ Funding source

A funding source is needed.

- ☐ Staffing

Staffing is needed.

- ☐ Existing regulations and/or laws

Analysis of impacts on the following factors is **OPTIONAL**:

- ☐ Operational

- ☐ Social

By educating the public that fires are a natural and necessary part of Tahoe's ecosystem, rather than erroneously implying that forest

management can eliminate fire risk, they are more likely to take action to better protect their homes. However, people also should be educated on how to prepare for uncontrollable fire events as might occur on severe fire weather days. This preparation should include mapping evacuation routes, processes for collecting valuables and important documents, and how to work with fire professionals to meet their needs (proper signage, access to hoses, etc).

- ☐ Political
- ☐ Policy
- ☐ Health and Safety

There is a need for comprehensive evacuation plans for neighborhoods, cities and counties.

- ☐ Environmental
- ☐ Interagency